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Chairman:

Mr. RANA

(Nepal)

CONTENTS

- General debate on all disarmament agenda items

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 45 TO 66 AND 155 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. JANDL (Austria): Under agenda item 55, the First Committee is considering questions of chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons. With regard to the forthcoming Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, which will be held in 1991, it seems to be appropriate to say a few words on the prospects for the biological weapons convention and on biological weapons in general.

The 1972 biological weapons Convention is generally regarded as a very important instrument, since it is the first real disarmament treaty in its field. It goes far beyond the relevant provisions of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which was merely a treaty on arms control. To date, approximately 110 States are parties to the Convention. This is indeed impressive, but we must not forget that a considerable number of countries - in fact, more than 50 - are still not parties. We hope, therefore, that those States which have not yet acceded to the biological weapons Convention will do so in the near future, so that the goal of universality may be achieved.

With regard to the current biological weapons régime as set up pursuant to the Convention itself, the two Review Conferences, in 1980 and 1986, and the meeting of experts in 1987, we can identify three main elements: definition, verification and co-operation.

The first, definition of the prohibited substances, is certainly a very technical one. That is why I do not want to go into the details of this question. Let me just say that, in the light of the rapid progress achieved in the

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

biosciences, the so-called biotechnical revolution, the steadily continuing adaptation of the definition of the prohibited substances and agents is of the utmost importance. If this problem is not tackled in a globally satisfying manner, we have to fear the diminution of confidence in and respect for the Convention.

The second element of the biological weapons régime is the issue of verification, which is certainly the most important and the most crucial one. It is often stated that the biological weapons Convention, in spite of its achievements and its significance as one of the first genuine disarmament treaties, is incomplete, as it lacks verification provisions. True, there is no such real verification mechanism as in other disarmament instruments, but it would be too superficial to deny that there are certain, even if very vague, possibilities related to the field of verification. I should add, however, that the present provisions in the treaty and the Final Documents of the Review Conferences are not sufficient and should, in the Austrian view, be amended by measures of genuine verification.

The treaty stipulates in its article V that:

"The States Parties...undertake to consult one another and to co-operate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objective of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention."

(resolution 2826 (XXVI), annex)

It goes without saying that this language is rather weak, since it does not comprise any legally binding factor; everything is left to the political will of the States parties. Furthermore, there is no provision as to who should be informed about the findings or what sanctions should be imposed.

At the Second Review Conference, in 1986, and the meeting of experts, in 1987, very important provisions were established on confidence- and security-building measures. These contain mechanisms for the exchange of data on certain types of

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

laboratories, on the abnormal outbreak of infectious diseases, and on other matters. Research should generally be unclassified and information should be given on symposiums and conferences, as well as on publications. In the light of the significance of such measures, some experts even consider the confidence- and security-building aspect of the biological weapons régime to be its fourth element.

To date, not more than 27 countries have participated in the exchange of data; this is only about one fifth of the total number of States parties to the Convention.

The field of co-operation constitutes the third element of the biological weapons régime, the focal point of which is undoubtedly the question of transfer of technology, in particular, biotechnology. The Convention provides for the right of States parties to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information. Furthermore, the treaty stipulates that its implementation should avoid hampering economic or technological development with regard to peaceful activities. The separation laid down between research for hostile and that for peaceful purposes is one of the central points, although there is also the dilemma that the results of research for peaceful purposes could easily be applied for purposes of weapons and warfare.

The regulations with regard to the transfer of information and technology make it obvious that there is also a strong element of the North-South dimension, which must not be overlooked. As in many fields of disarmament, technology whose proliferation should be prevented is not necessarily for hostile purposes only. A wide spectrum of this know-how and these techniques can also be used for peaceful development. Developing countries feel rightly uneasy about the various restrictions which make it impossible for them to get access to the relevant technology.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

Let me now focus on the prospects for the biological weapons régime, in particular with a view to the Third Review Conference, in 1991. I should like to concentrate on three elements, namely, exchange of data, co-operation and verification.

The exchange of information constitutes, in our understanding, a very important and precious confidence-building measure. By eliminating mistrust and fear and providing for openness and transparency one can create increased understanding and confidence, which has a positive influence on the security situation and is hence conducive to disarmament. Based on this conviction, Austria and many other countries have always been advocates of such security-building measures and continue to invite other States to participate as much as possible in such undertakings, because this would have a favourable impact on the international security situation, both regionally and globally.

The issue of co-operation, in particular the transfer of technology, demonstrates the influence of the North-South constellation even on questions of disarmament. Developing countries are concerned that the biological weapons régime, in particular a strengthened one, would impose further restraints on the transfer of biomedical research results to the developing world, thereby hindering the chances of building their industries and, hence, impeding their deserved and desired development, especially in very promising fields. They fear that this could widen the gap that already exists between North and South. These concerns deserve our careful attention. Special attention, and maybe special actions or regulations, will be necessary in the future in order to create favourable conditions for what it is hoped will be universal accession to the biological weapons Convention. It will be one of the most important tasks of the Third Review Conference to address this question. Only very broad accesssion can thwart efforts

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

to circumvent the regulations of the biological weapons régime, which might take the form of transferring activities to countries not parties to the Convention. A régime under which certain groups of countries would feel excluded would not have the necessary arms-control effect.

The most crucial issue with which the Third Review Conference will have to deal is certainly the problem of verification. Austria and many other countries feel that the Third Review Conference should address this question, since the Final Document of the Second Review Conference - in its article XII - also speaks about the possibility of creating future legally binding improvements in this area.

Certainly, as was also pointed out in the Final Declaration of the Second Review Conference, there are divergent views on basic questions of the verification of the biological weapons Convention. Austria is aware of these problems. Nevertheless, many proposals have been made so far by experts, diplomats and academics. A considerable number of brochures and books have recently been published containing significant information and concrete suggestions. They deserve to be studied very closely and carefully. With a reasonable amount of goodwill, it should be possible to achieve a consensus on verification provisions at the Third Review Conference.

(Mr. Jandl, Austria)

In respect of a possible future verification régime, Austria is of the opinion that the possibility should be explored of establishing a mechanism to carry out surveillance of laboratories and research centres and to monitor possession of bacteriological and toxin agents. Also, there should be certain minimum guarantees against possible violations of the convention. The proposal to set up a control agency deserves careful attention, since an international organization of that kind would be in a position to establish the relevant safeguards.

As members will be aware, my delegation has, since it presided over the Second Review Conference, always submitted to the First Committee the draft resolution on biological weapons. This year too, together with the Australian and Netherlands delegations, we have prepared a draft resolution in this field. As we feel that the text is a very reasonable one and takes into account the various opinions States have on the matter, we do hope that as many countries as possible, particularly those States parties to the biological weapons Convention, will find themselves in a position to join with us in sponsoring the draft. We also hope that, as in previous years, the text will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. TOTH (Hungary): In the general debate of this Committee, it has repeatedly been stated that the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on the comprehensive and global prohibition of chemical weapons, and on the destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles, continue to be the most promising area of activity in multilateral disarmament. Nevertheless, it has also been said that the favourable political climate, which is the result of a number of factors, has not been made manifest in a major step forward in the negotiating efforts. Many of us had expected that the bilateral agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, on the cessation of the production of chemical weapons and the radical reduction of their chemical weapon stockpiles with the aim of eliminating

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

them totally if certain international requirements are met, would provide further incentives to speed up the multilateral negotiations.

Regrettably, this has not been the case; rather, it has led to further differences between the negotiating parties. My delegation would prefer the bilateral agreement to be viewed in a different light and with a much more positive attitude: perhaps we should recall that for many long years it was the Soviet-American confrontation that stalled the multilateral negotiations on chemical weapons. It is difficult to understand why it is that today, when relations between the two super-Powers are characterized by co-operation instead of confrontation and they are making strenuous efforts to solve long-standing problems such as the issue of a ban on chemical weapons, there is still no real progress being made in the multilateral field.

There is some justification to the claim that experience shows that it is always the last few steps that are the most difficult in a marathon negotiation, and I fear that our endeavours are not the only ones where this is the case. This year's work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons has brought to the surface a number of sensitive political issues which are of fundamental importance to the future chemical weapons convention. It is regrettable that after years of intensive negotiations, the list of issues still outstanding remains rather long. It includes questions of verification, that is, ad hoc and challenge inspections; universal adherence to the future convention; assistance in the case of a chemical attack; sanctions; safeguarding the peaceful uses of chemistry; and the difficulties associated with the composition and function of the Executive Council. I do not intend to address all these issues, as there is an appropriate forum for doing so. Instead, I would rather touch upon a number of questions which are of interest to us and to which we attach great importance.

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

One such issue is, of course, that of verifying compliance with the future convention. For some years, the dividing issue in respect of verification has been not whether we should have it or not, but rather how much verification is desired by the negotiating parties and is acceptable to them; that is, the issue has naturally been focused on confidence in verification measures. In the course of the negotiations, several interesting proposals have been put forward which also appear to be workable. In fact, the different types of verification - routine, ad hoc and challenge inspections - represent a package which, in our view, would create a system which would meet the verification requirements of a convention on chemical weapons. Of course, there needs to be additional discussion of these issues, but we believe that the path taken by Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Hyltenius, is the right one and should be pursued.

It is also evident that to implement disarmament treaties presupposes a certain amount of initial confidence on which to build when applying the various means of verification. Hungary's objectives in putting forward its confidence-building initiative at last year's session of the General Assembly were to contribute to the atmosphere of the negotiations and to promote the notion of creating this initial spirit of trust. Pursuant to that initiative, we presented the members of the Conference on Disarmament with detailed data on the Hungarian civil chemical industry compiled in conformity with the provisions of the draft convention on chemical weapons. It is our conviction that initiatives of that and other kinds aimed at building confidence have a role to play in our negotiating efforts.

There is another aspect, of relevance to the convention, to which I would like to draw your attention. The draft convention, as it stands today, does not sufficiently address the issue of the relationship between States parties and

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

countries remaining outside the convention. This leads us to the sensitive and important issue of proliferation. Currently, there are no draft provisions in the rolling text which would regulate the transfer of chemicals and chemical technology to States which decide not to join the convention. The international community has repeatedly expressed concern over the danger represented by the spread of chemical weapons. We believe that the existing, partial non-proliferation measures outside the provisions of the convention, though important, are not effective enough.

These measures should be incorporated in the future legal instrument, together with such additional measures as are required. Naturally, this should be done on a non-discriminatory basis for States parties to the convention, and the peaceful uses of chemistry should not be barred to them in any way. In our view, the future chemical weapons convention could be undermined in the longer run if States remaining outside the convention enjoy the same rights as States parties to it, which will have accepted considerable obligations.

If one tries to sum up the years of negotiations on chemical weapons, it is the time factor which is most immediately striking. It is difficult to explain to the international community why it is that after two decades of negotiating, with repeated instances of the use of chemical weapons in certain areas of conflict, with terrible effects, we are still not in the position of having a ban on chemical weapons. The irresponsible threats of the use of chemical weapons in the present crisis in the Gulf also add to the arguments for a ban on chemical weapons at the earliest date.

If we are to preserve the credibility of our efforts, we all must display increased political will to conclude our work. The proposed meeting of the Conference on Disarmament at the foreign minister level - if it is properly prepared - could be a forum for demonstrating that increased political will. We

(Mr. Toth, Hungary)

pledge our full support to the endeavours of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in holding consultations on this and other relevant subjects. In our view, a failure to sign the convention in a year, or two, will be a clear indication of total failure, and we might as well give up the notion of ridding mankind of the threat this horrible means of waging war represents.

Mr. TAYLHARDAT (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, I am well aware that speakers must refrain from offering congratulations to the officers of the Committee, but I trust you will allow me, exceptionally, and as a former Chairman of the Committee, to express to you my pleasure at seeing you preside over our debate at this session of the General Assembly. On my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation, I pledge you our full co-operation in ensuring the success in your work. We should also like to thank all the delegations that have made very generous comments about my chairmanship of the First Committee at the last session of the General Assembly.

As has frequently been stated in the course of this debate, the First Committee at the present session is being held against a favourable background. That background has been enhanced by a climate of understanding and co-operation within which the relations between the two major nuclear Powers are being pursued and by the atmosphere of profound and significant changes taking place in Europe.

This positive development in the international political climate has helped to bring about the important events in the area of disarmament that have taken place recently. In the past year the two major nuclear Powers have continued to make progress in reducing their nuclear arms. They have done so by implementing the 1987 Treaty on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles.

In this context we note with satisfaction that the United States has completed the destruction of all of its shorter-range nuclear forces and that it is proceeding to the destruction of longer-range and land-based cruise missiles.

Other efforts in the nuclear disarmament field that we welcome are the negotiations that are taking place on the treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce strategic weapons. When this instrument is completed it

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

will be one of the most important instruments that has ever been adopted in the field of nuclear disarmament. We take note of the statement that was made by the Director of the United States Agency for Arms Control and Disarmament to the effect that once this treaty has been signed the two super-Powers will continue to negotiate new agreements on additional reductions in their offensive strategic weapons.

As others have said in the course of this debate, we too recognize that these measures are important steps towards compliance with the obligation under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which the nuclear Powers undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament. Full compliance with this commitment seems, however, to be far off. Those steps must be followed by other, stronger and bolder steps leading to full compliance with this provision. To this end it is necessary for the Conference on Disarmament to undertake substantive negotiations on the cessation of the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament with a view to adopting concrete multilateral measures leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Although responsibility for nuclear disarmament continues to rest on the shoulders of the nuclear-weapon States, this question continues to be a source of legitimate concern for the rest of the international community, inasmuch as it affects the global security of the planet.

Another important event that has taken place recently is the approval by the United States Senate of the ratification of the Treaty on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests of 1974, and the Treaty on peaceful underground nuclear tests, of 1987. These are, without any doubt, important steps that should promote the early conclusion of a treaty completely banning nuclear tests.

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

However, we are concerned that there are some who feel it is still necessary to carry out nuclear tests, arguing that, as long as it is necessary to use nuclear deterrence in defence, these experiments cannot be abolished. This approach compels us to recognize that notwithstanding the important progress we have mentioned, the day is still far off when mankind will be completely free of the danger of a nuclear catastrophe, for as long as those weapons continue to exist the risk of a nuclear disaster will not disappear.

In this context the Conference on Disarmament must begin to play a decisive role. An important step in this direction is the long-hoped-for decision by the Conference on Disarmament, after an interruption in the substantive work on the question, to restore the Ad Hoc Committee so that it can deal specifically with item 1 of the Conference agenda, on a nuclear-test ban. Regrettably, the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Committee does not satisfy the expectations of countries which, like Venezuela, believe that the fundamental task of the Conference is to negotiate concrete measures on agenda items.

A complete ban on nuclear tests is, in the opinion of our delegation, a short-term goal and the first step in the direction of putting an end to the qualitative improvement in nuclear arms, thus contributing to curbing vertical proliferation. Venezuela is convinced that a complete ban on nuclear tests must be sought by all possible means. Together with five other States, we have taken the initiative of introducing an amendment to the 1963 Moscow Treaty. The idea was to extend to underground nuclear tests the limited ban which is set forth in that treaty. We are sure that the amendment conference to be held in January of next year will fully achieve the objective of converting the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty concerning nuclear tests. That conference, like other review conferences, must show a spirit of constructive compromise,

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

setting aside radical and intransigent positions. The benefits of a constructive spirit which has been felt in the disarmament negotiations between the two Powers has not yet, unfortunately, been extended to outer space. Efforts to prevent the arms race in outer space continue to encounter the same obstacles today as they have in the past. This is confirmed when we observe that the talks on space questions being carried out by the Soviet Union and the United States continue to be circumscribed within the relationship between offensive and defensive weapons and are oriented to achieving an agreement that will authorize the emplacement of defensive strategic systems.

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

In this area, the Conference on Disarmament was once again unable to record progress because of resistance to the efforts made by almost all countries to adopt serious measures aimed at ensuring that outer space would not become another arena for an arms competition.

We continue to believe that one way to achieve this objective would be to modify article IV of the outer space Treaty so that the partial ban in that Treaty may become the total prohibition of weapons in outer space.

Another important event in disarmament which has taken place recently in the bilateral sphere is the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union in June this year on the destruction of their chemical weapons arsenals and the cessation of the production of such weapons. We are confident that that agreement will give a final push to negotiations on chemical weapons in the Conference on Disarmament.

However, we are concerned by the fact that the agreement contains certain flaws which stand in the way of achievement of the objective of a total ban on chemical weapons. Venezuela attaches priority importance to agreement on a multilateral instrument of a universal and non-discriminatory nature establishing a general and complete ban on chemical weapons.

The events which have recently darkened the world scene show that, notwithstanding the efforts made in the past and the commitments entered into, there remains a danger of armed conflicts occurring in which chemical weapons might be used. The images of armies equipped with protective masks against chemical weapons, which had seemed to be a warning reminder of monstrous events in the past, have again appeared before the eyes of mankind. The presence of soldiers wearing gasmasks and their distribution to civilian populations in countries neighbouring the conflict zone increase our perception that the horror of chemical warfare is no longer a remote danger but an imminent threat for which one must be prepared

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

without even knowing if the equipment will provide adequate protection against a means of warfare as cowardly and treacherous as chemical weapons.

This makes it necessary for the Conference on Disarmament to speed up its work and give priority to its efforts to conclude its excessively lengthy work, which has already lasted more than a decade, on the draft convention prohibiting and totally eliminating chemical weapons. We agree with those delegations which say that the time has come to make these efforts universal, opening participation to all countries during the final stages of preparation of the Convention. An important role is being played by consultations which have taken place in recent years within the framework of the First Committee to give information on the matter to States which are not members of the Conference on Disarmament. But it is time to think about a special session of the General Assembly aimed at the conclusion and signing of the convention as a way of ensuring that all countries in the world become parties to it and assume all the commitments and obligations involved in the prohibition of the use and production of chemical weapons and the total elimination of existing arsenals of chemical weapons. Similarly, we believe that the proposal to hold a ministerial meeting of the Conference on Disarmament next year devoted to the subject of chemical weapons is an initiative that should help eliminate the obstacles that still stand in the way of negotiations on a chemical weapons convention.

In the same context a regional seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean on chemical weapons is to be held in Venezuela in April next year. The central objective of that seminar will be to familiarize Governments with the scope, purposes, objectives, verification machinery that is to be established and, in general, all legal and technical aspects of the future convention on chemical weapons in order to facilitate the internal administrative and legislative

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

procedures that will have to be followed for the early ratification, entry into force and implementation of this important instrument. It is hoped that participating Governments will appoint officials from their foreign ministries or other governmental bodies who, in one way or another, will be able to participate in the adoption of decisions relating to the approval and implementation of the complex provisions of the convention on chemical weapons.

An important aspect of the negotiations taking place in the Conference on Disarmament, and one which has not yet been taken up in connection with chemical weapons, is the question of the financing of the future organization concerning the prohibition of chemical weapons. As progress is made on negotiations in the Ad Hoc Committee it becomes increasingly necessary to consider this matter because of the complexity and magnitude of the organization to be set up and the financial burden which its functioning will impose on States parties to the future convention.

We have repeatedly stressed the need for the clear definition of the principles that will serve as parameters in apportioning the costs of the functioning and operation of the organization. In our opinion, the main criterion to be taken into account is equity, by which I mean that those countries which possess chemical weapons or have a chemical industry capable of producing them, to which will fall the major responsibility concerning the verification system, should bear the main financial burden of the organization. Countries not having either chemical weapons or the intention of acquiring them, of which Venezuela is one, should make only a symbolic contribution in support of the international effort to abolish these weapons.

Next year the Review Conference of the bacteriological weapons convention will take place. That important meeting should lead to the adoption of strict and efficient verification machinery that will prevent any risk of violation of the provisions of the Convention.

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

We attribute great significance to the progress that has been made in the European area on conventional disarmament. We are confident that very soon a treaty will be concluded reducing to equal levels the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and of the Warsaw Pact and providing for the destruction of the surplus armaments. We welcome the efforts in the negotiations on confidence- and security-building measures within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which should lead to the development of new principles of regional security that are not based on superiority of weapons or armed forces.

Now that significant progress has been made in the process of nuclear disarmament and serious movement has begun towards reducing the levels of armaments and armed forces in Europe, the region in which traditionally the greatest volume of weapons and troops has been concentrated, it would seem that the time has come to undertake in other regions of the world similar efforts to reduce weapons and military expenditures.

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

Conventional disarmament at the regional level should be the subject of more specific treatment with a view to the implementation of concrete measures to curb the unnecessary build-up and international transfer of weapons. That would be a way of helping to prevent the risk of regional conflicts, alleviating tension and creating conditions more conducive to the consolidation of peace and security throughout the world.

Another topic that we should continue to discuss in great depth is the implementation of scientific and technological advances in the production of weapons. This question has been the subject of two General Assembly resolutions and it should continue to appear on the disarmament agenda as a means of bringing together all relevant information to identify the measures that should be adopted by the international community to deal with this costly and disturbing trend in the production of weapons.

The use of military resources and technology in efforts to protect the environment is a new subject that deserves special attention. The use in efforts by countries to preserve the natural environment of military resources and of the sophisticated technology hitherto devoted to the production of weapons has a potential that has not yet been fully assessed. However, it could be of significant assistance in combating the threat the world faces as a result of the acts of aggression against the ecosystem. In this area we are prepared to co-operate with other delegations which have begun to express their concern and which feel that the time has come for the United Nations to take an interest in the relationship between disarmament, development and the environment.

The First Committee of the General Assembly has a fundamental role to play in this new era in international relations. The United Nations finally has begun to carry out the mission for which the Organization was originally conceived. Changes that have taken place in the international arena have made it possible for the

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

Organization to play its proper role as the institution responsible for ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security.

The First Committee plays an important part in fulfilling that responsibility through its efforts to promote disarmament and contribute to the consolidation of international security. This task should be greatly facilitated by the strengthening of the Organization that has taken place in this post-cold-war era or post-confrontation era.

The progress in bilateral negotiations or in small regional disarmament forums is no substitute for the role of the multilateral disarmament bodies of the United Nations system. This is particularly true in the case of the Conference on Disarmament whose role, rather than being weakened, should be strengthened and expanded to ensure that the benefits of the agreements reached at other levels are enjoyed by the entire international community. These agreements have revived the hope that the efforts of the United Nations, which have so far been slow, and frustrating because of their meagre results, will finally lead to some progress towards specific results which will lead to effective disarmament measures on a universal scale. Here we completely agree with the statement made by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, that

"The disarmament process must be globalized to include all types of weapons and to extend to all countries and regions." (A/C.1/45/PV.4, p. 6)

This global approach to all disarmament questions is the approach that for many years now has been part and parcel of the efforts concerning the comprehensive programme of disarmament. This particular initiative is now more relevant than ever before because of the favourable circumstances that prevail in international relations and the atmosphere of understanding that now exists between the two principal nuclear Powers. It should now be possible to overcome obstacles and reservations that some countries have raised to negotiations on a comprehensive

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

programme of disarmament, the primary goal of which should be precisely to endow the international community with a comprehensive disarmament plan that will make it possible to achieve the goal of general and complete disarmament as called for by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The purposes and objectives that have brought us together in the Committee are better defined and more relevant now than ever before, and this is an expression of the unswerving aspiration of the international community. The auspicious international circumstances brought about by the East-West rapprochement, and further enhanced by the disappearance of the ideological confrontation that has divided the world since the last war, should make the disarmament efforts of the international community more productive. We must take advantage of this new international situation with constructive determination and respond with specific action to mankind's new expectations concerning the role of the United Nations. Those of us who are dedicated to contributing to the efforts of the Organization in the area of disarmament must not allow those aspirations to be frustrated.

The CHAIRMAN: I take this opportunity to reiterate our deep appreciation of Ambassador Taylhardat's able and wise guidance of the work of the Committee last year.

Mr. SHARMA (Nepal): While congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election, I wish, on behalf of our delegation, to express to the members of the First Committee our deep appreciation of this honour and privilege.

We wish also to congratulate Mr. Ronald Morris of Australia, Mr. Sergei Martynov of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and Mr. Modem Lawson-Betum of Togo on their respective elections as Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of the First Committee.

(Mr. Sharma, Nepal)

The most potent symbol of the changing times and attitudes has been the unification of Germany, within the framework of a more secure Europe. The process of openness and democratization has spread beyond Central and Eastern Europe to countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Their positive impact on bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States and on negotiations on reductions of conventional forces and weapons in Europe is already evident. Nepal shares the profound satisfaction at these positive developments. The tone and content of statements during the general debate bear witness to the observation of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Akashi, that the First Committee is holding its first truly post-cold-war session. As always, the Committee has an ambitious agenda before it; but hopes of capitalizing on the positive trends in international relations have never been higher.

An obvious area of concentration for us is the strengthening of the inherent complementarity of bilateral and multilateral disarmament negotiations. The awesome military power of the two super-Powers makes continuing dialogue between them an imperative, but disarmament and security are areas in which each nation, whether large or small, has a vital stake. If peace and security are to benefit all, arms control and disarmament need to be the product of a global co-operative effort. The propitious climate of international relations offers an unprecedented opportunity for ending the crisis of confidence in the ability of multilateral forums, with the exception of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 1990 session, to pursue the objectives of disarmament.

(Mr. Sharma, Nepal)

In making this comment I have in mind the report of the Conference on Disarmament (A/45/27). My delegation shares the general feeling that the report does not offer much ground for optimism. We realize of course that arms control and disarmament are immensely complicated matters and do not lend themselves to quick solutions. We do not expect miracles overnight; however, we do expect signs of some forward movement in regard to all items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. Except for the crucial negotiations on a global convention on chemical weapons, the Conference on Disarmament seems to have made very little progress. The progress in negotiations on chemical weapons, too, has not been up to the expectations of the international community. In this regard, I refer to the statement made by the representative of Hungary this morning. This unhappy trend must be reversed if confidence is to be maintained in the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

Conventional disarmament will soon reach a milestone with the signing of an agreement on conventional forces in Europe. Many speakers in this debate have cautioned against the complications that this welcome development might add to the already vexed issue of the transfer of conventional arms. My delegation joins in the appeal that weapons that have become surplus as the result of an agreement on conventional forces in Europe should not be transferred to other regions of the world. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of an international arms transfer register as a step towards curbing what has been seen as a burgeoning trade.

The significance of changes in Europe go far beyond arms control and force reductions. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process is steadily leading Europe - traditionally the most heavily armed region of the world - to a new security system. While each region has its own peculiar security considerations, the CSCE process is a strong reminder that regional and subregional

(Mr. Sharma, Nepal)

approaches to confidence-building measures can go a long way towards removing the mistrust that underlies the arms race.

This is an objective pursued by the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. The extremely fruitful discussions in an unofficial setting on confidence- and security-building measures in Asia held at the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu in January of this year is an example. The meeting was the first step towards generating interest in confidence-building measures (CBMs) and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) and in actually examining the various options that could be applied to the Asia-Pacific region. A beginning has been made and my delegation hopes that the useful exercise will continue.

Disarmament negotiations require a will for dialogue, accommodation and co-operation. They represent a recognition of the fundamental rights of all States to security and peace. The Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament emphasized how important it was for all States to abide by their obligation under the Charter if anything lasting was to be achieved through disarmament. If mistrust and the arms race have a mutually reinforcing relationship, only a legal order that encompasses the entire community of nations can provide a framework for effective multilateral co-operation. The rule of law, impartially administered and enforced, alone will guarantee peace and stability for all. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the delegation of Singapore for the thoughtful elaboration of this theme in a statement made in this Committee.

I have not even touched on many important items on the Committee's agenda. However, I cannot end my statement without expressing Nepal's support for multilateral efforts to meet the challenges of arms control and disarmament. The persistent threat of nuclear weapons, the disquieting proliferation of chemical

(Mr. Sharma, Nepal)

weapons capabilities, the massive transfer and accumulation of sophisticated conventional weapons and the disturbing proliferation of sophisticated technologies of mass destruction, make the United Nations the only forum capable of meeting these challenges. The improvement in the political climate could prove precarious if these issues remain unattended. To maintain and increase the momentum of disarmament, there is also growing pressure on the developing countries not only to make constructive proposals but also to prove by practice what we preach.

Finally, I wish to place on record my delegation's appreciation to the Department for Disarmament Affairs and to the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs for their most valuable services in meeting the growing demands on the United Nations in the fields of arms control, disarmament and international security, notwithstanding the limited resources at their disposal.

Mr. HASSAN (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): My delegation, Sir, is particularly happy to see you presiding over his session of the Committee's work. I should like to take the opportunity to convey to you, and to the other officers of the Committee, our warmest congratulations.

We meet at a time of significant progress in the area of international relations, particularly with regard to political co-operation between the two super-Powers and the positive transformations taking place in Eastern Europe. All this has had a very clear and pronounced impact on disarmament efforts and has brought the world out of the cold-war era into an era of co-operation and peaceful coexistence in which the role of the United Nations has become essential and effective.

This new and positive climate has reflected positively on the handling of international and regional problems. We can very easily imagine, had the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait taken place in a cold-war context, how it might have led to a Third World War. We can also imagine how the world could have been divided

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

on viewing that issue. To imagine what could have been is to become aware of the significance of the new international circumstances under which it has been practicable to use the United Nations machinery, particularly that of the Security Council, in a unique and single-minded fashion, in facing up to this aggression.

The second fact which we should not ignore is that this new spirit has not prevented a brutal force from perpetrating acts of aggression. This fact highlights the danger of amassing weapons, either by the super-Powers or on a regional level.

My delegation has spoken of this problem on various occasions because armaments and arms expenditures obstruct development in the third world and continue to be a fundamental source of armed conflicts in the world.

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

While Iraq's aggression against Kuwait is the outstanding example of the barbarity of armed force and the temptations of aggression, the other example is Israel which continues to employ its vast and sophisticated military arsenal in committing acts of aggression against the Arab peoples and in exterminating the Palestinian people, the perpetual target of its occupation, acts of murder and displacement.

We are surprised at the postures of certain States which continue to strengthen Israel's military arsenal regardless of the dangerous consequences that arise from such actions, with regard to peace efforts in the Middle East and of the fact that Israel is the only country in the region that has consistently refused to place its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Israel possesses all the weapons of mass destruction and was the first to introduce them into the Middle East region. In Africa, the South African régime is another example of the use of military force and is the principal cause of instability in southern Africa. The racist régime uses military force to destabilize neighbouring African States and to terrorize the black majority within its own borders in pursuit of its policy of apartheid, which is an affront to human dignity and an insult to international public opinion.

It is clear from the foregoing examples that the stockpiling of weapons and their use for aggressive ends has pernicious results and promotes the pursuit of illegal goals. We cannot hope to find any political stability or any security in any region of the world that is afflicted with the amassing of military arsenals by régimes that abuse their power and use their weapons for purposes of hegemony, aggression and domination.

Respect for the values, norms and principles of international law and the United Nations Charter is the only way in which States and peoples, both large and

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

small, can achieve peace, security and stability. Had Iraq observed the principles of the Charter, it would never have invaded a small and peaceful neighbour, it would never have expelled a people from its land and it would not have pillaged the goods and properties of those people or destroyed their economy. We firmly demand respect for the United Nations Charter and observance of its letter and spirit, as well as respect for the norms and rules of international law, in the interest of national, regional and international peace and security, so that any people can live in peace and security and contribute to the development of civilization, which, in the end, is the heritage of all mankind.

My country welcomes the ongoing changes in Eastern Europe, and wishes the peoples of those countries every success in revitalizing the economies. We also commend the efforts of every State that has started to reduce its military forces and cut its military expenditure. We hope that all the other States that possess armaments in excess of their security needs will destroy their surplus weaponry and cut their military expenditures, since it has been demonstrated that the possession of an enormous military potential does not result in peace, security and stability in any way but, rather, creates heavy pressures on the security of all States and peoples.

We do not wish for the elimination of excess armaments in any one region or continent to be achieved at the expense of other regions and continents. That is to say, we do not wish to see the transfer of excess weaponry from one region to the other. Weapons are a source of concern, a means of destruction and a drain on resources in every region, whether in East, West, North or South, both in the developed and the developing countries.

The illicit arms trade is a violation of national and regional sovereignty and is a form of terrorism. It too drains the financial resources of developing countries. Therefore, we hope that all countries that manufacture and export

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

weapons can work out and implement a convention on the illicit arms trade, in co-operation with other States, the United Nations and the competent specialized agencies.

We condemn all unethical transfers of radioactive and toxic waste from the industrialized world to other countries in Africa and the Middle East as well as the dumping of such materials on the high seas, since such acts contradict fundamental human values and civilized norms. We call upon all States that export such wastes to deter their companies that export such poisons. The United Nations can play a vital role in this respect and protect the developing countries from this danger.

We welcome all bilateral efforts by the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate certain categories of armaments such as intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, and welcome the ongoing negotiations on strategic long-range missiles and their reduction by 50 per cent. We hope that a convention will be signed very soon so that new negotiations may begin with a view to achieving further arms reduction. We sincerely hope that the two super-Powers will not replace the armaments that have been eliminated with new weaponry.

We also consider it essential that the other nuclear Powers enter into negotiations to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Such negotiations should not be confined to the United States and the Soviet Union. We welcome the multilateral efforts in Europe to reduce conventional forces in that continent and to establish a climate of confidence-building and security there. We also believe it important for Europe to begin to reduce its military arsenals, which far exceed its security needs. This should be done in other regions and continents as well.

Naval armaments have an enormous destructive potential, and, therefore, reductions in conventional weapons should include naval armaments, thereby helping to promote a climate of security for both coastal and land-locked States.

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

As for chemical weapons, the agreements reached so far between the United States and the Soviet Union on the dismantling of chemical-weapon stockpiles represent a great victory in the struggle to eliminate those unethical weapons. We welcome the statements made in Paris and Canberra on chemical weapons, and hope that an international convention will be concluded on the prohibition of manufacturing, stockpiling and using such weapons. A linkage should be established between the banning of chemical weapons and the banning of other weapons of mass destruction.

Outer space is the common heritage of mankind. We call for the demilitarization of outer space and for a ban on the placement of armaments, lasers and other high-frequency weapons in that environment. Are Earth-based weapons of mass destruction not enough? Why must outer space be transformed into a theatre for mass destruction? We demand that outer space be kept free from all weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Hassan, United Arab Emirates)

It is not acceptable that any State or group of States should use outer space to threaten mankind and thereby endanger the future of space exploration and the contribution it could make in the service of man and his civilization.

My delegation has consistently called, with other States of the region for a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. Unfortunately, Israel continues to be a source of destabilization, as it is the only country in the region which possesses nuclear weapons. It also contributes to the atmosphere of instability through its nuclear collaboration with the racist régime of South Africa, the pariah of the international community.

My country reiterates its call for making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace and security. The peoples of that important region want to be free from all outside threats. We must therefore remove all obstacles to the 1991 convening of the Colombo conference.

The United Nations has long played an important role in the maintenance of peace and security, particularly in the areas of arms reduction and complete disarmament. We commend the Organization's tireless and intensive efforts in that respect and welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the efforts of all the agencies with responsibilities in this field. We hope these praiseworthy efforts will continue so we can preserve the climate of coexistence between the super-Powers and accelerate disarmament efforts intended to lead to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

To be sure, the First Committee has a leading role to play in this. We support the efforts to rationalize the work of the Committee, and hope that draft resolutions can be combined. As for draft resolutions on which there is consensus, once adopted, they should be implemented.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

FIRST COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
Monday, 29 October 1990
at 3 p.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RANA (Nepal)
later: Mr. MARTYNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)

CONTENTS

- General debate on all disarmament agenda items

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 45 TO 66 AND 155 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. PEREZ VILLANUEVA (Spain) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me first, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am sure that under your expert and skilful leadership we shall make progress along the tortuous and difficult path of disarmament.

I should like also to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Taylhardat of Venezuela for the magnificent job he did last year.

A few days ago Ambassador Negrotto of Italy made a speech on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community; my delegation of course supports that speech in its entirety. Nevertheless, I should like to set forth in greater detail my Government's position on some specific issues on our agenda to which we attach particular importance.

Over the past few months rapid and drastic changes have been taking place on Europe's political scene. These are having radical and beneficial effects on relations between the two great blocs, which have confronted each other ever since the end of the Second World War from opposing ideological positions, now left behind. The immediate consequences of this new state of affairs are, first, German reunification, which once more my country acclaims, as it has from the first in other forums; and, secondly, the appearance on the scene of a new climate which has already begun to bear fruit in the area of security and disarmament.

My delegation very much hopes and expects that this new climate will contribute to accelerating the pace of our work, enabling us to advance towards a more secure and stable world in which national security will be achieved through lower levels of forces and weapons, only those needed to maintain the capability to ensure adequate defence being retained.

(Mr. Perez Villanueva, Spain)

However, this encouraging outlook has been overshadowed and threatened by Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and which the international community and the United Nations have swiftly, emphatically and energetically condemned.

The United Nations in general and the First Committee in particular should play an essential role in the area of multilateral disarmament and must therefore be strengthened to improve their effectiveness. As long ago as last year my delegation asked other delegations to spare no effort in rationalizing the work of the Committee, seeking through flexibility and pragmatism the consensus needed to achieve specific results. The United Nations must not miss this historic opportunity and must play an increasingly important role in the area of disarmament.

(Mr. Perez Villanueva, Spain)

The political events and changes that have taken place in Europe since last autumn are particularly important. In this framework the forthcoming Paris summit of Heads of State or Government of the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the signing on that occasion of a historic treaty on conventional disarmament in Europe will throw wide open the door to the twenty-first century, creating a climate of peace, security and co-operation on the European continent. We hope that similar efforts will be made in other regions of the world as well, thus enabling us to make headway in the building of a safer and more peaceful world.

In this area of conventional disarmament, confidence- and security-building measures should play a fundamental role. Therefore Spain, aware of the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in this area, believes that all nations should agree to exchange, at the appropriate time and within the framework of this Organization, detailed data on their military structures, so as to dissipate any mistrust and lay a solid foundation for negotiations on conventional disarmament.

Similarly, my Government supports the conclusion of the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on a substantial reduction in their strategic nuclear arsenals, and the beginning, after the signing of the treaty on conventional disarmament in Europe, of negotiations between the two countries on the reduction of short-range nuclear forces. We support unreservedly a realistic approach that will make it possible gradually to reduce nuclear testing with a view to its prohibition in the future. In this context, we welcome the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union have been able to arrive at an agreement that makes possible the ratification of the Treaty on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes and the threshold test-ban Treaty. My delegation hopes that the agreement will lead to progress in this area.

(Mr. Perez Villanueva, Spain)

Proliferation in all its aspects constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. My delegation believes that the non-proliferation policy must be based on three essential pillars: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, and control of the technology that can be used in the manufacture of missiles for launching such weapons.

The mandatory periodical Review Conference of the non-proliferation Treaty provided for in its basic text met recently in Geneva.

In this connection my country, together with many others, believes that the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons has, with a few exceptions, been satisfactorily prevented. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of the Treaty is being achieved in a reasonably effective way and this, combined with the new international climate, will undoubtedly lead to the indefinite extension of the Treaty beyond 1995.

The Conference emphasized new and positive elements, on which there was an encouraging consensus, while general acceptance of the objectives of the Treaty and general satisfaction with the way it was operating were manifest.

However, the foregoing was not summed up in a final document and, although this does not totally diminish the validity of those elements, the results of the Review Conference did not correspond to the reality of the current status of the Treaty and the degree of compliance with the commitments made; nor did they reflect the real, verifiable, historic advances in nuclear disarmament over the past few years.

For the Conference to deal exclusively with the disarmament aspects of the Treaty and give them priority over all other aspects, while at the same time imposing a linkage between the extension of the Treaty beyond its expiration date

(Mr. Perez Villanueva, Spain)

and the cessation of nuclear testing here and now, not only was unrealistic and impractical but also prevented the adoption of a final document.

The very serious risk of the proliferation of chemical weapons and their possible use must lead us to reflect on this threat hanging over mankind. My delegation firmly believes that this danger must be averted by the rapid conclusion and entry into force of the convention on the total, comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons.

The third pillar of non-proliferation is control of the technology for missiles capable of launching these weapons. As members are aware, Spain participates with another group of countries in the missile technology control régime, whose aim is specifically to avoid proliferation without hindering the transfer of technology that could be used for peaceful purposes. We hope that this régime will be strengthened by enlarged membership, thus making the established controls more effective.

I have left until last an issue to which my country attaches the greatest importance: the operation and enlargement of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. For some years Spain has defended the need for the work of the Conference to meet the world's expectations of it. For some years also Spain has asked that the problems which are paralyzing efforts to ensure enlargement of the Conference be resolved. The changes in Europe are, in our judgement, the sword that can cut the Gordian knot that has caused the obstruction. The ending of tensions between East and West and the unification of Germany, resulting in a vacant seat at the Conference, should lead us to reconsider the premises upon which the envisaged enlargement was based. Therefore, it is legitimate to consider not only whether the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament can continue to be based on the system of co-optation used until now, but also whether, if that system is retained, the same rules will continue to be viable.

(Mr. Perez Villanueva, Spain)

In conclusion, Spain hopes that the enlargement and the admission of new members will take place as soon as possible, and that, if it is considered appropriate, the seat formerly occupied by the German Democratic Republic will be filled. In this context I should like to remind the Committee of Spain's application for membership of the Conference and participation in its work as a full member.

Mr. KHAMSY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic I should like to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. You represent a country and a people with which we, the Lao people, have for centuries shared intellectual kinship and aspirations to universal peace. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The profound, rapid changes in the concept of the world and the perception of relations among States occurring on the international scene during the last 12 months convinced us that our world was moving inexorably towards détente and co-operation, that all disputes between States could henceforth be settled by peaceful means, free of ideological rivalries, and that armed conflicts and wars could be avoided by efforts to achieve mutual understanding and negotiations. The rapprochement and co-operation between the two super-Powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, in the spheres of disarmament and of international security made it possible to end the cold war, which had divided the world into two rival blocs for more than 40 years and at one point almost plunged it into a nuclear war. The international community could not but welcome and rejoice at this new shift in the situation, which promised to lead to the establishment of a new international order in a world that henceforth would be non-violent and free from nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's
Democratic Party)

It would have been too good to be true if, at the dawn of the third millenium, the advent of the Persian Gulf crisis had not come along to remind us of the still-very-fragile nature of the situation in which we live. The brutal annexation of an independent State by a neighbouring country that is more powerful and better armed, the consequent concentration in the region of foreign troops and the most modern and sophisticated armaments, and the threat of the use there of weapons of mass destruction could at any moment ignite the powder keg and trigger a general conflagration, whose disastrous consequences would certainly transcend the borders of that region.

Given this explosive situation, which is likely to obtain in the future in other regions as well, the issue of general and complete disarmament has therefore become one of the most urgent problems and, in my view, the entire international community should deal with it with all the intensity and earnestness it deserves.

To be sure, the question of disarmament has been debated from the very first months of the founding of our universal Organization, with the emergence of nuclear weapons on the international chessboard, and since then a large number of resolutions and decisions have been adopted by various bodies of the United Nations system. However, it has not proved possible to formulate effective measures to meet the need to establish norms and levels of weapons necessary for defence and the security of States without giving them the capability of engaging in large-scale offensive operations.

In this connection we greatly appreciate the policy of military transparency adopted by the Soviet Union, a policy which, if followed by the other military Powers, will enormously facilitate our Organization's task. On the other hand, we welcome the decision also taken by the Soviet Union in 1988 to proceed to a

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's
Democratic Party)

significant unilateral reduction of its military forces and armaments, in particular tanks, artillery pieces and combat aircraft. All these decisions testify to the determination and great responsibility of that country, whose new military doctrine, drawn up and adopted in 1987, is relevantly based on the principle of the maintenance of a reasonable level of armaments sufficient to ensure its defence. We hope that the other military Powers in the world will be in a position to follow this valuable example in order to give the Disarmament Commission's work the renewed impetus that could gradually lead to its long-awaited success.

These unilateral disarmament measures which I have just noted should be encouraged and supported and given the same weight as negotiations or agreements at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. For all pro-disarmament initiatives and enterprises, both nuclear and conventional, complement and have repercussions on each other while working towards one and the same goal: general and complete disarmament.

To revert to bilateral negotiations, in particular those between the Soviet Union and the United States - the two most militarily powerful States in the world - the international community is unanimous in recognizing the importance of the progress made since the signing of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty - in December 1987, making possible the systematic destruction of their land-based intermediate-range nuclear missiles. At the last Soviet-United States summit, in Helsinki, the two countries once again affirmed their intention to try to sign, at the end of this year or at the beginning of next year, the START agreement, which should provide for a 35 per cent reduction in their strategic nuclear-weapon arsenals and should have a favourable impact on multilateral disarmament work in other sectors.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's
Democratic Party)

We are particularly pleased with the agreement on chemical weapons signed between the two countries during the Washington summit early last June. That agreement, which - in addition to providing for the destruction, starting at the end of 1992, of the greater part of their declared stockpiles - envisages, in particular, on-site inspection and verification and a commitment to stop producing these weapons once the agreement enters into force and - the most significant element in the present context of the Gulf crisis - expresses their common determination to step up multilateral negotiations to finish preparing as soon as possible the draft international convention on a complete and final ban on these weapons. Their joint declaration on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, issued at the same time, marks another important step on the path to nuclear disarmament, although at the Fourth Review Conference on the non-proliferation Treaty held recently in Geneva, no final declaration could be adopted owing to the lack of political will on the part of certain nuclear States, to the great regret of the majority of Member States.

As far as conventional disarmament is concerned, it is encouraging to note that, thanks to the intensive changes that have taken place over the last few months in Europe, work within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has advanced to the point where we can now foresee that at the next summit conference to be held in Paris three weeks hence the leaders of the 34 member States will be able to conclude a final agreement on major reductions of their troops and weapons, in particular those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, from the Atlantic to the Urals. That agreement will be all the more important since it will mark the end of four decades of East-West military confrontation and the establishment of a new political order on that

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's
Democratic Party)

continent. Certain circles, however, are expressing concern that the weapons thus jettisoned, including large quantities of tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery pieces, helicopters, combat aircraft and other light arms, may subsequently freely find their way to third-world countries, given the lack of international regulation of the transfer of weapons, and thus become instruments of destabilization, tension and confrontation in those countries. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, a small country with meagre resources, fully shares this concern.

Along the same lines, my delegation again expresses its opposition to the maintenance of military bases, the installation of arms and munitions storage facilities, and the carrying out of military manoeuvres by certain Powers beyond the boundaries of their own territory. All these measures, which can lead to conflicts between States, should be carefully studied by the Disarmament Commission and banned in the same manner as the other forms of the arms race.

The United Nations, through the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, is the most appropriate, the supreme body to tackle and solve the problem of general and complete disarmament. But if work in this area is to yield results, it is important for all States, large and small, to adhere scrupulously to the principle of the non-use or threat of use of force in international relations, as provided in the Charter of our Organization. It is on the basis of strict respect for this principle that my country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, intends to join to the extent of its possibilities in the international community's efforts in this enormously difficult and complex task of disarmament.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Nana Sutresna who, in his capacity as current Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, will introduce the report of the Commission.

Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia), Chairman of the Disarmament Commission: In my capacity as the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Commission on its 1990 session, document A/45/42. As in previous years, the report consists of four chapters and annexes, the result of the Commission's deliberations on the various disarmament subjects on its agenda during the 1990 substantive session. In particular, chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations which duly reflect the status of deliberations on disarmament issues that the Commission achieved in May this year.

As in previous years, the 1990 session was organized in accordance with the mandate of the Disarmament Commission set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in the guidelines set by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh and forty-fourth sessions in resolutions 37/78 H and 44/119 C, in which the Commission was requested to direct its attention at each substantive session to specific subjects and to make every effort to achieve concrete recommendations on such subjects to the General Assembly at its subsequent session. After arduous deliberations during its 1990 substantive session, the concrete recommendations made by the Commission to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session have been adopted by consensus, as noted in paragraph 28 of the report. Those recommendations were adopted either by each of the four working groups and a contact group or by the consultation groups, which took charge of the respective substantive items of the agenda. It should be pointed out that during this session

(Mr. Sutresna, Chairman,
Disarmament Commission)

the Commission was requested to deal with seven substantive items on its agenda. Among them, one was a new item, namely, "Objective information on military matters".

In this connection, I am happy to state that during the year the Commission was able to conclude all substantive agenda items except the new one. The Commission adopted texts by consensus on items regarding the question of South Africa's nuclear capability, the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, conventional disarmament and the draft Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade. Considerable progress was also made on the item regarding naval armaments and disarmament. The findings and recommendations on the subject were endorsed by all participants in the consultations.

In giving a general assessment of the work of the Commission I consider that success has been achieved at the 1990 session with co-operation, flexibility and a spirit of compromise being demonstrated by all member States. The item regarding the arms race and nuclear disarmament was generally considered to be the most difficult one on the agenda. Under that item, the Commission was required practically to formulate a mini-comprehensive programme of disarmament. At this juncture, it is not surprising that the Commission was not able to adopt a consensus text on the subject. The recently announced agreement in principle between the Soviet Union and the United States at the summit meeting in June this year on the negotiations for a reduction in strategic nuclear weapons was only part of the issue and could not provide a substantive impetus to the multilateral negotiating process on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Other aspects of the issue were duly reflected in the Fourth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held in August and September this year.

During past years, many members of the Commission pointed out that the Commission should limit the number of items on its agenda in order to devote its

(Mr. Sutresna, Chairman,
Disarmament Commission)

maximum effort to a few items on which the chances for success are better than on other items. Last year many delegations made specific proposals in this regard. It was true that some of these subjects under consideration had been maintained on the agenda of the Commission for many years with no conclusions, though it was duly acknowledged that the lack of favourable international conditions in the past had contributed to such an outcome. In this connection, under its able Chairman, Ambassador Bagbeni Nzengeya of Zaire, the Commission was able to formulate a set of "ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", set out in the annex to resolution 44/119 C. This reform programme was formally adopted by the Commission at the substantive session this year.

With respect to the organization of work of the Commission in 1990, it was gratifying to note that despite some difficulties on the question of establishing a subsidiary body for the new agenda item, the Commission was free from procedural and organizational problems on the question of the equitable distribution of the chairmanship among subsidiary bodies and the duration of the session. In this regard I believe that some of the pre-session consultations were extremely useful and contributed greatly to the smooth organization of the work of the Commission this year. The adequate arrangement of meetings also improved the utilization of conference resources at the 1990 substantive session. I am convinced that appropriate consultations among delegations with the assistance of the Department for Disarmament Affairs would facilitate the work of the Commission in future, bearing in mind the adopted reform programme of "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission."

Finally, I should not fail to express my gratitude to all delegations for their understanding and for their business-like manner of conducting the work of the Commission this year with a view to fulfilling the task entrusted to it by the

(Mr. Sutresna, Chairman,
Disarmament Commission)

General Assembly. A special tribute should be paid to the officers of the Commission, in particular the Rapporteur, Mrs. Liberata Mulamula of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairmen of the various working groups, contact group and consultation groups, namely, Mr. Sergei Martynov of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, you, yourself, Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina, Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte of Brazil, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, Ambassador Skjold Mellbin of Denmark, Ambassador Emek Ayo Azikiwe of Nigeria, and Ambassador Peter Hohenfellner of Austria, for their co-operation and assistance. On behalf of the Commission I should also express thanks to the Department for Disarmament Affairs for the valuable assistance provided to the Commission, particularly by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, as well as by their colleagues serving as secretaries of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission. On behalf of the Commission I extend my great appreciation to other members of the Secretariat who assisted the Commission in carrying out its task.

I now have the honour to present the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, document A/45/42.

Mr. JAYA (Brunei Darussalam): At the outset, Sir, I wish to extend my very warm congratulations, and those of my delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am delighted to see you, the Ambassador of your country, Nepal, with which Brunei Darussalam enjoys warm and friendly relations, chairing the work of this important Committee. We are confident of the success of our work under your guidance. I wish to extend my congratulations, too, to the other officers of the Committee, whose dedication has contributed to the work of the Committee.

Our meeting today is held against a background of significant changes that are transforming the global, political, and economic landscape. These changes have set in motion new trends towards peace and reconciliation throughout most regions of the world, with inter-State relations among the community of nations entering a new peaceful dimension.

As stated by my Foreign Minister during the general debate, such peaceful trends must be seen from a comprehensive global perspective, rather than from the viewpoint of one or two regions only. The global détente should enable us to address the question of the accumulation of weaponry and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

It is crucial that we not simply accept the phenomenon of arms acquisition as an inevitable feature of inter-State activity since it is often the deep-seated cause of protracted armed hostilities. Unless the problem of arms reduction is addressed, the prospect of a comprehensive peace - the global peace and stability we all seek - may exist only in localized situations.

The situation in the Gulf is clearly an indication of the fragility of the new peaceful global order. The unabated transfer of arms to the region during the Iran-Iraq conflict has raised the capabilities of countries in the region to engage in a devastating war. It is one of the tragic ironies of the arms transfer

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

industry that one is now confronting weapons of mass destruction of one's own creation.

As I noted earlier, we have witnessed changes in the conduct of inter-State relations. We have been encouraged by the co-operation shown by the super-Powers in seeking to resolve complex international matters. As a result of such positive attitudes, and given the support of all nations, the United Nations, and especially this Committee, is in a position to play a more influential role in discussions on disarmament. Such a United Nations role is, we feel, critical if past failures are to be avoided, as nations attempt to secure actual arms reductions, effective controls and guarantees for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We believe that preventing such failures calls for the active involvement of the United Nations and the observance of its Charter by all Member States, together with a commitment to bilateral and regional disarmament dialogues in consonance with United Nations efforts.

We hope that the improved international climate will bring renewed efforts on the part of all countries to pursue faithfully the goals of disarmament. The disappearance of East-West tension has lessened the quest for military superiority, and this, we hope, can be translated into actual arms reduction. This trend so far seems to be confined only to the East-West context. Meanwhile, the accumulation of arms in the rest of the world, especially in the third world, continues. By their actions it appears that many third-world countries are now engaged in an arms race of their own. This is a reflection of the underlying problems which characterize the political landscape of the third-world nations. The situation is being compounded by the contradiction created by the need for solutions to problems of

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

underdevelopment in the third-world countries on the one hand, and the need for these countries to obtain more weapons on the other.*

✓ Evidence of this can be seen in the continued proliferation and intensification of the arms race, much of which is due to the sense of insecurity of countries as to other countries' intentions and respect for international law. This has contributed to the constant accumulation of existing weapons - conventional and nuclear - as well as to the development of new ones.

Each State has the right to unthreatened security. We hope that, given the present international détente, confidence-building measures can now be actively undertaken. We thus welcomed the convening of a regional meeting on confidence-building measures in the Asia-Pacific region held in Kathmandu earlier this year as an important step towards building sturdier relations devoid of suspicion and mistrust. The opportunity that now presents itself to forge a new world order that is not tied to the size and capabilities of any country's weaponry must not be lost.

The United States and the Soviet Union have led the way. The signing of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - in 1988 was a landmark achievement towards arms limitation. We hope that this can be followed by a similar success in the strategic arms reduction talks (START). At their June meeting this year both the Soviet and United States leaders reaffirmed their determination to have the treaty on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms completed and ready for signature by the end of this year. We hope that this Treaty will achieve what it seeks to accomplish -

* Mr. Martynov (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

a reduction of the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war and the strengthening of peace and international security. We are also of the view that if we are committed to halting the arms race and controlling the qualitative development of weapons of mass destruction, we have to address seriously the question of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We regret that the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons did not achieve consensus on the relationship between nuclear testing and the non-proliferation régime. We had hoped that, with the growing concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the international community, particularly countries with nuclear power, would be equally disposed to a comprehensive test-ban treaty. It is only logical to ban nuclear testing if we do not want nuclear weapons to be continually developed. We urge the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee at the 1991 session to pursue negotiations towards a comprehensive test ban.

We are equally concerned that despite the 1925 Geneva Convention the use and threat of the use of chemical weapons continue to be a feature in regional conflicts. All necessary efforts must continue to be made in order to strengthen the existing Convention on chemical weapons. To this end, we welcome the United States-Soviet agreement at their June summit meeting to destroy their chemical-weapon stocks. We hope all countries that possess such weapons will take similar measures.

As my Foreign Minister noted at the General Assembly, hostilities that lead to an escalation of the arms race cannot be satisfactorily addressed unless the causes germane to the conflict are also examined. Whether the causes are political in nature or whether they lie in the economic, social and environmental problems experienced by many nations, they provide the prescription for hostility and set the stage for armed conflict.

(Mr. Jaya, Brunei Darussalam)

Therefore, as we seek ways to address directly the question of arms reduction, a concurrent effort to remove fundamental threats to world peace must be undertaken. Only then will the lofty goals enshrined in the preamble of our Charter be attainable.

Mr. MUJICA CANTELAR (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation is most pleased that Mr. Rana is presiding over the work of our Committee. We see this as a well-deserved tribute to his diplomatic skills and experience and a reaffirmation of the fact that, in our Organization and in disarmament matters, all countries can make a contribution that must be taken into account, regardless of their geographical size or their economic or military power.

We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau, and assure them that we are fully prepared to co-operate with them as they carry out their duties. We are certain that they will spare no effort to ensure the success of our work.

Everyone is aware that the political environment in which our work is being carried out has evolved, particularly as compared with past sessions.

The trend towards the peaceful solution to regional disputes that seems to be emerging, the profound changes that have taken place in Eastern Europe, the continued improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, which are now moving on a path of greater understanding and co-operation and, thus, the enhanced climate of détente in the European continent - all are signs of the new times.

All of this must, of course, have an influence on our work. Some, including our Committee, are of the view that the cold war is over. While respecting that view, we think that, although steps have been taken which, we hope, will lead to the elimination of that dark period, we must say frankly and with the greatest humility that it is not yet time to applaud the disappearance of that period. Suffice it to recall that, among the actions that characterized the dawn of that post-war period, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were victims of bombings with a type of weapon of mass extermination, which led to the start of the nuclear era, and now,

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

over 45 years later, after unceasing warfare, we have not yet been able to eliminate the threat of nuclear war and there exist more sophisticated and technologically advanced weapons than those unleashed on the Japanese cities.

Moreover, while the cold war was marked mainly by military and ideological confrontation between East and West, at first concentrated primarily on the European continent - where the Soviet Union emerged from ruins after paying a tremendous price for its struggle against fascism - the scope of this confrontation broadened beyond Europe and took root in destructive policies in other wide-ranging and far-reaching regions of the world, including Asia where, for example, there is still an artificial division of the Korean peninsula, and Latin America and the Caribbean, where Cuba, after almost three decades, is still subjected to the blind and indiscriminate cold-war policy of the very empire that gave the world this disastrous brain-child that has done and continues to do so much damage to our peoples.

It is, therefore, not enough for relations between the Soviet Union and the United States to improve and for relations among European countries to become more harmonious, rather than tense, although we certainly welcome such a development. But beyond that, there is need for even more radical change in mentalities, approaches and actions in international life.

Is there any difference between destabilizing efforts, interference in the internal affairs of other States - including the use of subversive and illegal broadcasts against independent countries - violations of sovereignty, acts of aggression and attempts to use hunger as a weapon and to impoverish peoples? These are measures which, in the past, were taken against some countries in Europe, and which are now being implemented against many third-world countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that only ask for fair treatment and respect for their desire to

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

live in peace and to proceed with their own development and economic and social well-being.

Perhaps we no longer have the cold war, but there are still billions being spent on designing new, more deadly and sophisticated weapons, even though we have seen that, immoral as it may be, as we come to the end of the twentieth century, there are tens of millions of persons, particularly children, who are dying of hunger or as the result of disease and epidemics, for which science has developed very cheap, effective cures.

Perhaps what is happening is not the cold war, even though those who have the scientific and financial resources to save those lives have not done so.

Is it not a cold war when the economies of third-world countries are allowed to be bled to death and millions of their inhabitants are condemned to live in misery and when day by day they are increasingly stifled by incessant demands to settle the external debts in the billions for which they are not responsible?

Is it also not a cold war when we see disarmament agreements being signed between the nuclear Powers but there are still coercive, large-scale military manoeuvres being carried out close to independent, sovereign countries with the aim of flaunting military superiority to threaten and intimidate peoples?

Unfortunately, we cannot subscribe to the supposition that the period of the cold war, with all its adverse effects on mankind, has already been left behind.

While we welcome the encouraging changes that have been taking place internationally, we think that hastening to declare the post-cold-war era is nothing short of underestimating reality and ignoring the voices of many peoples in various regions also calling for an end to cold wars and other wars of all types that affect their potential to achieve the just and noble peace to which they aspire.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

As has been recognized, the greatest threat to mankind is nuclear weapons. While preventing the outbreak of nuclear war is a task of the highest priority, the best guarantee that these weapons will not be used and that the human race can be preserved is the total elimination of such weapons.

The bilateral agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the elimination of their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, which is currently being implemented, will very shortly lead to the possibility of eliminating one type of nuclear weapon, even though this represents but a slight decrease in existing capabilities for annihilation.

The agreement recently signed and ratified at the summit between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States with respect to the intent to sign, early next year, an agreement on the elimination of part of their strategic stockpiles will, no doubt, mark another significant step towards the reduction of nuclear weapons.

Our delegation welcomes all the progress achieved to date, and we trust in the adoption of future agreements on strategic and other types of nuclear weapons.

However, while the threat of nuclear holocaust has been removed somewhat, and nuclear weapons have been reduced to some extent, mankind is still hostage to the possibility that such weapons will be used. Consequently, we cannot falter in our just demand for the prohibition and total elimination of such weapons.

In the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive study on nuclear weapons by a group of experts under the chairmanship of Ambassador Theorin - which we commend - it is clear that in 1990 there remain some 50,000 nuclear warheads deployed throughout the world and the aggregate explosive power of current nuclear arsenals is in the region of 13,000 million tons of TNT, or 1 million times the explosive energy of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

It would appear that the experts have not managed to reach agreement on a matter that seems to have been dealt with rather briefly but which we none the less consider very important. I am referring here to the relative and constant development and improvement of nuclear weapons and their modernization through continued application of scientific and technological progress. That responsibility falls to the nuclear Powers, including the two main nuclear Powers, and contributes constantly to the continuation of the nuclear arms race and to the so-called vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We cannot overlook the constant demand and claims of the international community, including our own Organization, for a definitive and total end to nuclear testing. It is really astonishing that even today, after the failure of the recent Fourth Review Conference of the non-proliferation Treaty, there are some delegations that take the liberty of defying the international community and try even in our Committee to convince us that nuclear-weapons testing must be continued if they are to retain their credibility and power as a nuclear deterrent.

The delegation of Cuba, convinced of the justice of the position of the group of delegations that, headed by Mexico, has taken the initiative of convening an amendment conference on the partial test-ban Treaty, fully supports that demand and trusts that the Conference, to be convened early next year, will be a new milestone in the efforts to bring about a total test ban and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Similarly, we are in favour of strengthening the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, thus avoiding the situation in which, after several years of inactivity, it was only possible to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear-Test Ban in the final stages of the work of this current year, and even so with a very limited mandate, with barely the possibility of recommending its immediate re-establishment at the start of next January's session of the Conference.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

The struggle against the problems of drugs, crime and the deterioration of the environment are issues that have more recently emerged as transnational problems with global repercussions. While not denying the intrinsic merit of those issues and the need to find solutions to them, some have suggested that they be given priority that would lead to their being included among the issues to be studied and considered by the Security Council, which would thus extend the area of competence of that United Nations body.

We must ask ourselves once again if the question of a complete and total ban is something that affects all countries. Is it not a question of transnational character and global impact with which we have been dealing for many years? It has consequences for the survival of mankind, inasmuch as it cannot be separated from the question of nuclear weapons, and should it not therefore be dealt with and considered as a matter of greater priority than any other topic that is pressed upon us as a matter of priority?

Another matter that merits attention among the issues before us is that of chemical weapons. Despite continued appeals by the General Assembly for the earliest possible conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons, and despite the efforts made, it has not yet been possible to conclude work to that end. A number of issues remain to be resolved, and they require more political will than technical skill.

Our delegation, which urges the earliest possible conclusion of a convention banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons, as well as a start to the destruction of that type of weapon and its production facilities, will continue to work actively for a universal, non-discriminatory convention that would establish equal rights for all parties and would not impede the development of the chemical industry or international co-operation in the peaceful use of that resource.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

In its statement last July, the Group of non-aligned and neutral countries of the Conference on Disarmament, after noting the bilateral agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the destruction and non-production of their chemical weapons, expressed regret at the fact that the revisions proposed by those countries to the draft multilateral convention will have negative effects because, inter alia, they postponed a decision on the total elimination of chemical weapons and imposed certain conditions, extending rights to States based on the possession of chemical weapons and creating a situation of legal uncertainty with respect to the scope and implementation of the multilateral convention. The Group also stressed its view that the final goal should be a convention that would be non-discriminatory and have universal support.

The delegation of Cuba, as stated in the declaration of the Group of 21, is of the view that total destruction of all chemical weapons and their production facilities should be unconditional and decided on as of the conclusion of the convention itself, as stated in the present draft convention. We also reiterate our position that the most effective means of preventing the dissemination of such weapons lies solely in a total and complete ban on them. We must therefore state our disagreement with the approach aimed at setting up partial measures in the so-called chemical-weapons non-proliferation régime.

I turn now to other topical matters such as conventional disarmament. After years of efforts, the most recent meeting of the Disarmament Commission managed to conclude its study of that matter, adopting a document by consensus that set out the principles to be observed for the adoption of measures in that area. Our delegation welcomes the outcome of the work achieved, even though we would have preferred a more intensive treatment of the question of qualitative improvement and application of the most modern technologies to conventional weapons.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

For the delegation of Cuba, conventional disarmament is an important component of general and complete disarmament in which we cannot overlook the progress that is being made in nuclear disarmament, which is of the greatest priority. In recognizing the particular responsibility of the nuclear Powers and States with the largest military arsenals, as well as the need to meet defence requirements in keeping with the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity without a reduction in security, our delegation notes that it is necessary to put an end to acts of aggression, interference and intervention in the internal affairs of States so as to bring about an atmosphere that would enable all States to participate in that process.

Some delegations have stressed the appropriateness and necessity of adopting conventional disarmament measures at the regional level; some have even given it great priority. Earlier studies by the United Nations itself offer elements requiring serious analysis, but the European experience no doubt offers a more objective view of such measures, particularly when, just a few days from our debate, in the context of the summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which is to take place in Paris, the first agreement will be signed on conventional disarmament in Europe. We welcome that event, as it will no doubt have positive repercussions for international peace and security.

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

A matter of extreme importance, as has already been recognized, is the need to take into account the specific characteristics of the region and to secure the participation of all States concerned and ensure that their views are taken into account.

Recent events in Europe have created conditions conducive to the negotiation of disarmament measures, which will be given concrete form in the very near future. Taking into account the characteristics of that continent, where the two world wars began and developed and where attitudes and positions of mistrust led to the setting up of the two major military alliances, it is not surprising that the most sophisticated weapons and arsenals anywhere on the planet are to be found there.

While the negotiating exercise in Europe and the measures that will be adopted are welcome and give us cause for congratulation, there is no doubt that each region or continent has its own special peculiarities and characteristics. In other regions and continents account must be taken in seeking the desired goal of peace of such things as non-military threats to security. Consideration should also be given to the history of interference of a political nature, military aggression and other types of interference by Powers acting in a regional context, quite apart from those which are geographically outside that framework.

Consequently it is essential that these Powers be invited to accept commitments with respect to conventional disarmament that will eliminate the possibility of using aggression against other countries or in any way threatening their security, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. It is also essential that those Powers' stockpiles of conventional weapons be reduced to the level necessary for their defence.

I cannot conclude my statement without referring briefly to the question of the so-called rationalization of the work of the First Committee. For some time

(Mr. Mujica Cantelar, Cuba)

our Committee, adopting a practical approach, has sought to rationalize its work in the best possible way. We do not object to continued efforts to determine how best to proceed with our work, confident that this will result from the efforts and contributions of all, provided this is done without sacrificing the basic objectives and priorities of our work. There may be areas in which it is possible to merge, or perhaps even reduce, texts, but we should not be discouraged or criticize our own approaches if, when there are divergent positions, we cannot come up with a common text, or if we have to resort to voting where it is not possible to achieve a consensus.

Mr. BULL (Liberia): Permit me at the outset, on behalf of the Liberian delegation, to extend to Mr. Rana of Nepal warmest congratulations on his unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. The wealth of experience that he brings to this post assures us that the work of our Committee will be successfully completed under his able leadership. Our congratulations go also to the other officers of the Committee.

Since the last session of the General Assembly the international political environment has continued to undergo significant changes. The cold war has come to an end and the ideological confrontation between East and West has been replaced by a new era of peace and co-operation. The growing rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union has enabled them to achieve some progress on important agreements in the various fields of disarmament.

These developments have had a particularly significant impact on Europe - the continent with the largest concentration of armaments. As a result, new initiatives are being taken to conclude a treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe, and negotiations within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) are making substantial progress.

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

These positive developments, however, have not ensured a durable peace, as some seemingly intractable problems in other regions continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. The unresolved conflicts in the Middle East, Asia, Central America and Africa have heightened the need for a sustained United Nations role in finding a permanent solution to these problems.

The unfortunate civil war in my country, Liberia, which has been raging for the past 10 months, has resulted in massive loss of human life and destruction of property. For various reasons, including the perceived internal nature of the conflict, this human tragedy has not, so far, received the attention it deserves from the international community.

In this post-cold-war era, it is likely that there will be a proliferation of such conflicts and that the United Nations will be expected to play a more decisive role in resolving them, especially those civil conflicts that result in widespread bloodshed. If the United Nations is to be true to its obligations under the Charter it cannot afford to be seen as adopting a stratified system in its emphasis on conflict resolution.

Since the first session of the General Assembly, in 1946, it has been recognized that general and complete disarmament involves both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons, especially with respect to their destabilizing effects at the regional level when arsenals are increased and new weapons are introduced.

It is estimated that over the last 45 years more than 200 conventional wars or limited wars have been fought, resulting in over 20 million deaths and the destruction of billions of dollars' worth of property. Indeed, it could be argued that such wars continue to pose an immediate threat to international peace and security, since no nuclear war has been fought since the end of the Second World War. Instead, limited wars have increasingly broken out, especially in regions of the developing world. These wars have left in their wake a cycle of violence,

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

death and widespread underdevelopment. My delegation therefore welcomes the study on the transfer of arms being undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations. However, it is necessary that the production and sale of arms also be addressed. The compilation of such data will help to ensure transparency, and that will contribute to disarmament efforts.

Of equal importance, in my delegation's view, is the concomitant need to encourage the producers of conventional weapons to identify non-lethal items for production. But this will require that the Governments in the arms-producing countries provide the producers with the necessary incentives and assistance to make the substitution. In the final analysis, the political will of the countries that produce arms will be required if arms reduction is to be realized.

The restriction of arms transfers to parties in conflict or to areas of tension could facilitate the process of the regional initiatives and other confidence-building measures that are so vital to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This is particularly true in the case of the Liberian civil war, in which many thousands have died as a result of the use of conventional armaments imported from abroad or supplied by countries within the region.

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

In this connection, the Liberian delegation wishes to associate itself with other delegations which have advocated that, in addition to the multilateral approach, regional approaches to disarmament should also be strengthened. It is also necessary that urgent measures to restrict international arms transfers should be identified. We share the view expressed by the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze in his letter to the Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar that the limitation of international sales and transfers of conventional weapons could be achieved by making full use of the authority of the United Nations.

In my delegation's view, chemical weapons, like conventional armaments, also pose an immediate threat to global peace and security because of some countries' propensity to use these weapons. My delegation wishes to join in the appeal that all States involved in the negotiations for the conclusion of a convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons should set aside their differences and act for the common good of mankind. If only there could be a greater awareness that all nations and peoples have a common destiny, there would be a greater willingness to act for that common good.

One of the best hopes for nuclear disarmament is the implementation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. It is a source of considerable regret that some nuclear-weapon States continue to pay lip service to appeals for this treaty to be concluded, yet meanwhile continue to conduct nuclear tests in pursuit of their perceived national interests. It should be clear that in our interdependent world this attitude encourages nuclear proliferation and further endangers international peace and security. It is to be hoped that the amendment Conference scheduled for January 1991 will result in the conclusion of the comprehensive test-ban treaty which is so vital to efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

The international community has become increasingly aware that the disequilibrium in the global economy, environmental degradation and other social ills also pose threats to international peace and security. An effective plan of action encompassing strategies at the national, regional and global levels must be implemented in order to address these problems.

The present relaxation of tension between the super-Powers has enhanced the climate of peace and co-operation, and should lead to a reduction in global armaments and armed forces. As noted during the United Nations special session on disarmament in 1988, the savings to be derived from disarmament could be used for development programmes, to improve the environment and ameliorate other social ills, particularly in the developing world. This peace dividend, so called, could have a profound impact on development trends in the 1990s and beyond, and could also improve the quality of life in developing countries and elsewhere.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace could make a meaningful contribution to disarmament. Since 1964 African States have called for the denuclearization of Africa. However, this objective has been thwarted by South Africa's continued development of its nuclear capability and expansion of its military arsenals in an attempt to preserve its abhorrent apartheid policy. We wish to call once again upon all countries, and in particular the major military Powers and all suppliers of nuclear technology, to terminate their collaboration with South Africa in the military and nuclear fields.

My delegation has taken keen note of the reports and recommendations of the United Nations Disarmament Commission on South Africa's nuclear capability. It is to be hoped that the South African Government's vow to institute fundamental reforms there leading to a non-racial, democratic society will be demonstrated not only by words but by deeds as well. We therefore join with other delegations in

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

calling upon that régime to accede to international instruments on non-proliferation and nuclear-weapon tests, as this would facilitate the denuclearization of the African continent and indicate South Africa's preparedness to identify with one of Africa's legitimate aspirations.

While we note that the arms race on the ground is declining, we are as much concerned about the growing militarization of outer space and the concomitant competition between the technologically advanced nations for military advantage. Outer space is the common heritage of mankind; hence, innovation in methods of exploring that last frontier should focus on peaceful purposes. In the area of disarmament, scientific knowledge would better serve mankind by ensuring verification of, and compliance with, agreements reached on arms reductions. The Liberian delegation therefore believes that the work on this matter carried out by the Conference on Disarmament must receive the full co-operation and encouragement of those nations that have made headlong advances in the exploitation of outer space, for it is with their support that the benefits of outer space will be shared by mankind.

The Liberian delegation attaches the utmost importance to enhancing the central role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. As a developing country with no military ambition beyond its borders, Liberia has relied on the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and to ensure that the security of one country is not pursued at the expense of other countries. That is why my country has continued to look to this world body for help in ending the Liberian crisis, which has broad implications for regional and international peace and security.

(Mr. Bull, Liberia)

It is our firm belief that a constructive process of confidence-building, dialogue and transparency in the security field can contribute not only to resolving the present conflict we are facing, but in laying a strong foundation for a viable long-term arrangement to ensure stability and peaceful inter-State relations in our region.

Finally, the Liberian delegation wishes to register its appreciation of, and satisfaction with, the excellent activities of the Department of Disarmament Affairs under the able leadership of Mr. Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We look forward to a continued, good working relationship.

The Biblical injunction in Chapter 2, verse 4 of the Book of Isaiah states:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".

These words have constituted the very foundation of the United Nations and the noble objective on which it has set its sights: the development of a peaceful world order in which all nations would work together for the common good, without fear of war because they have not only renounced war but converted their weapons to peaceful uses. This objective may seem idealistic, but God's words are true. My delegation believes that we are obligated to work for the achievement of this goal, not only for ourselves but for generations yet unborn.

The CHAIRMAN: I shall now call on any representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before doing so, I remind representatives that the Committee will follow the procedures that were outlined at the last meeting.

Mr. JERANDI (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): In exercise of the right of reply, I should like to reply to the contention by the representative of Israel in replying to the statement made by my delegation on 24 October. The Israeli contention was that to address the question of Palestine or deal with the policy of aggression and expansion pursued by Israel is a waste of this Committee's time and a digression from its agenda, since the Security Council is seized of those matters.

Does anyone need reminding that the First Committee deals similarly with issues of security and disarmament? Can any fair-minded person argue that Israel's intransigent colonialist and arbitrary policy and its objectives and practices of aggression and expansion in the Arab region are anything but a serious threat to the Middle East? A threat indeed that far exceeds the boundaries of that region since other remote countries, such as Tunisia, have not been safe from repeated Israeli aggression?

The fact of the matter is that the Tunisian delegation, in its statement, dealt solely with the points that are relevant to the work and concerns of this Committee, namely, security in the world. On the other hand, Israeli policy continues to be a cause of the arms race in the region in a way that no other region of the world has ever experienced. Can the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons by Israel be outside the scope of this Committee's work in the area of disarmament, especially when Israel continues to refuse to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to place its nuclear installations under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)? The answer is no, if we avoid selectivity. Israel has categorically and consistently refused to abide

(Mr. Jerandi, Tunisia)

by any law or convention by which the entire international community abides. As for the Israeli representative's contention that what is taking place in the occupied Arab territories and in Al-Quds are matters before the Security Council, we all know that Israel's posture has always been a continued refusal to comply with any Security Council resolution. It is the only State Member of the United Nations that openly declares its rejection of any Security Council resolution, just exactly as it has rejected the recent Security Council resolution 672 (1990) and thereby violated Article 25 of the Charter.

That is sufficient to demonstrate that my delegation has not gone beyond the agenda of our Committee and has not wasted our Committee's time. The reply of the Israeli representative once again is simply another episode in the series of impediments that Israel continues to put in the way of the United Nations to prevent the Organization from discharging its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East.

Mr. ZIPPORI (Israel): I have been caught by surprise. I had understood that the rules of our Committee were that statements in right of reply should be made at the end of the meeting at which the statement to which the reply is being given was made - or at the latest at the following meeting. The Tunisian representative wasted four days before he replied to my statement in exercise of the right of reply.

The only thing I should like to say now is that once again reply of the Tunisian representative was another example of his wasting 10 minutes of the Committee's time on a subject which we are not dealing with.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of Tunisia, who wishes to speak in exercise of his second right of reply.

Mr. JERANDI (Tunisia) (interpretation from Arabic): I merely wanted to make sure that the representative of Israel has indeed understood what I have just said. Neither he, individually, nor his country, should waste the time of the international community - since the international community is still trying to find solutions to this continuing problem in our region which suffers from violence and instability.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.